

READ ON ARIZONA Press Release January 15, 2014

READ ON ARIZONA SELECTED AS 2013 PACESETTER FOR COMMUNITY EFFORT TO PROMOTE EARLY READING

National honor recognizes collaborative campaign to ensure more students are reading at grade level by the end of third grade

PHOENIX, Ariz.—Read On Arizona's campaign to improve reading proficiency among its youngest students has been recognized as a 2013 Community Pacesetter by the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, an honor that reflects the energy, mobilization, and creativity that the local community has brought to this important work. Read On Arizona is one of 37 Pacesetters named for 2013.

"The Read On Arizona collaborative group believes that when Arizona reads, Arizona thrives, and it is helping communities align and mobilize services to deliver on the promise of third grade reading, so that every child is on track for college and/or career success. The Arizona Department of Education is thrilled to see Read On Arizona receive this well-deserved recognition around its commitment to making early literacy a statewide priority," said State Superintendent of Public Instruction John Huppenthal.

Read On Arizona is one of the <u>140 communities</u> working with the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, a nationwide movement of local leaders, states, nonprofits, and foundations putting a stake in the ground on the critical importance of third grade reading. To be part of this national network, communities must implement a collective impact strategy—engaging the full community around the goal of supporting early literacy outcomes for children from birth through third grade. For example, acknowledging that schools alone cannot address all the challenges that keep children from learning to read, communities work with nonprofits and other partners to ensure that children arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed, attend school regularly, and continue learning through the summer months.

Read On Arizona (officially launched in February 2013) has aligned a statewide public/private collaboration committed to developing an early literacy system that improves language and literacy outcomes for Arizona's children from birth through age eight—delivering the right program at the right time to every child. To accomplish this goal, it built a statewide early literacy collaborative involving education agencies, philanthropic organizations, and community stakeholders at the local, county, regional, and state levels to collectively raise awareness and coordinate early literacy services more effectively.

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Founding Partners of Read On Arizona are: Arizona Department of Education, Arizona Community Foundation, First Things First, Head Start State Collaboration Office, Helios Education Foundation, and Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust.

Read On Arizona Communities include: Read On Buckeye, Read On Chandler, Read On Cochise County, Read On Flagstaff, Read On Goodyear, Read On Greater Phoenix, Read On Phoenix, Read On Mesa, Read On Sahuarita, Read On Santa Cruz County, Read On Tucson, and Read On Yuma. Core partners such as City of Phoenix, City of Mesa, Buckeye City Council, Chandler Education Coalition, Goodyear City Council, Office of the Cochise County School Superintendent, First Things First Cochise Regional Partnership Council, Santa Cruz County Education Service Agency, United Way of Northern Arizona, United Way of Yuma County, and Valley of the Sun United Way play a facilitating role in supporting the local collaboratives.

Highlights of the work that garnered Read On Arizona this 2013 Community Pacesetter recognition include:

- Launched a statewide summer reading collaborative leveraging Arizona State Library's annual summer reading program, offered by public libraries statewide, as a springboard to involve educators, students, and parents in choosing summer reading materials based on interest and Lexile measures.
- Unveiled its website—www.ReadOnArizona.org—a resource-rich site offering early literacy information and tools for parents/caregivers, families, practitioners, and community leaders.
- Published an <u>Early Literacy Guide for Families</u> and, in partnership with McDonald's, distributed nearly 25,000 of the Guides on Family Reading Day via 250 sites throughout Arizona.
- Leveraged its partners statewide to promote attendance awareness month in September 2013.
- Shared its work, challenges, and lessons for other communities on the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading's Tell Our Story webpage.

"We are impressed and inspired by what Read On Arizona has accomplished so far," said Ralph Smith, managing director of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and a senior vice president at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. "With its commitment, resourcefulness, and collaborative spirit, Read On Arizona truly is setting the pace and providing a model for communities across the nation that are seeking to give more children a chance at a brighter future."

"Read On Arizona is a superb example of many partners working together across the State: When you see a Read On Arizona sign in a library, childcare center, or civic center, imagine the linked arms that are making it possible for more parents to read to their children; more preschoolers to get ready to succeed in school; and more third-graders to read at grade level," said Judy Jolley Mohraz, president and CEO, Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust.

About Read On Arizona

Read On Arizona is a public/private collaboration committed to building an early literacy system that improves language and literacy outcomes for Arizona's children from birth through age eight—delivering the right program at the right time to every child. For more information, visit www.ReadOnArizona.org.

About The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

Launched in May 2010, the <u>Campaign for Grade-Level Reading</u> is a collaborative effort of funders, nonprofit partners, states, and communities across the nation to ensure that many more children from low-income families succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship. It focuses on reading proficiency by the end of third grade, a key predictor of high school graduation and a milestone missed by fully 80 percent of low-income children. For media inquiries, contact Phyllis Jordan at <u>pjordan@thehatchergroup.com</u> or 301-656-0348.

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